



Jamaica at 21 – Mainly People Problem

by Errol Townshend

DRAGON BAY, JAMAICA. The two-and-a-half million people of the world's most sophisticated poor nation are celebrating their 21st anniversary of independence. It is a muted, even sober time, coming after the traumatic 1970s when experimentation with Michael Manley's brand of democratic socialism rent the social fabric asunder and devastated the economy.

Allegedly, there is now, once again, an economic crisis. The government of Edward Seaga is suffering its mid-term blues after having revived an economy that was flat on its back; stringent measures have recently been introduced as even he hasn't been able to borrow all the money his debt-ridden country needs. Prices of items such as airfares, gasoline, drugs and food — in that order of importance here — have risen sharply. Jamaicans don't much care why. All they know is that they were promised that money would jingle in their pockets. They are now suffering the morning-after effects of what Manley so aptly calls "the carnival of consumerism" permitted by Seaga, presumably to make this highly materialistic society feel good about itself again after years of shortages. Alcoholics and drug addicts can empathize with the withdrawal symptoms some middle class Jamaicans are now feeling.

But in Jamaica, reality is not always what popular perception makes it out to be. Less than an hour-and-a-half from the steaming, still-nasty capital of Kingston is the Milk River Mineral spa.

Some experts rate its curative powers tops in the world. It is a priceless national asset. Ninety minutes by air to the north is Florida, the retirement capital of aging America. Florida's blue-rinse set would give its last blue-chip stocks for a dip in the spa's healing waters. But 21 years after Jamaicans lost Britain as a scapegoat for its failures, despite the addition of a swimming pool (out of action recently because a pump broke down), and in spite of brave talk of four successive governments, this goldmine remains a disorganized dump. In a country which once offered to teach Cuba about tourism, there is no lack of managerial talent to run a tourist resort, in spite of large-scale emigration in the 1970s. Problem: how to bring the managerial skill and the government-run spa together to make a few million. That is a snapshot of what Jamaicans will swear is an economic crisis from which there is no escape, Manley and Seaga not having lived up their promises of "Better Must Come" and "Deliverance".

Allegedly, there is also a water crisis. The patience of Kingstonsians and some rural farmers is taxed to the breaking point to obtain water for bathing and irrigation. The Kingston reservoir is as dry as a Cuban microdam; some experts say the underground distribution system is leaking. Meanwhile, over here on the other side of the Blue Mountains, in the verdant

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Double Celebration for Jamaicans ✓

By Eddie Grant and Nena Hohn

Kicking off the joint 21st Independence and anniversary celebrations of Jamaica and the Jamaican-Canadian Association was a Flag Raising ceremony at the New City Hall, on July 21st at 1 p.m.

Among those in attendance were Rupert James, president of the Jamaican-Canadian Association, Bromley Armstrong and Roy Williams, two past presidents of the JCA.

This event was followed by a Thanksgiving Service at the prestigious St. Paul's Church at 227 Bloor Street East. About 1500 Jamaicans, Canadians and other West Indians from across Ontario and the United States attended.

In his welcome address to the congregation, Leslie Wilson, Jamaica's High Commissioner to Canada said, "This celebration reminds Jamaicans of their strength for weathering the storm over the last 20 years.

Representing the Anglican Diocese of Canada was Bishop Arthur Brown who encouraged Jamaicans to honour and appreciate each other's successes. He also told the congregation that we play a very important part in Canadian life and with God's help and our willingness to work long and hard we can become a Kingdom of many people living in one country thus reflecting the Jamaican Motto "Out of Many One People".

Jamaican-born Rev. L.A. Burke, a Roman Catholic Bishop in Nassau, Bahamas, told the audience that the church supports the struggles of Jamaicans and that every small country that seeks independence and sovereignty gets the full support of the church. He also said that he prays that "our entire nation be kept safe, and all Jamaicans of whatever colour or creed could live together in peace".



At cake cutting ceremony to mark Jamaica's 21st Anniversary, Leslie Wilson, Jamaica's High Commissioner to Canada (left) and Hon. Neville Gallimore, (Minister of State, Foreign Affairs). Looking on at centre is Jamaica Consul General Oswald Murray.

Cannon L. Harrison who delivered the sermon, gave thanks to God for Jamaica; for its beauty, its people, its freedom and independence. He also talked about Jamaica's struggle against poverty and recession. He asked Jamaicans to rededicate themselves to the goals of their country and told them it was important to remain loyal to their heritage. But he added that even though the past was important because of the sense of stability that it gives us, it is equally important to keep growing. He concluded his sermon by encouraging Jamaicans to work towards the improvement of life both in Jamaica and here in Canada.

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REFLECTIONS by the First President of The Jamaican Canadian Association

by Roy Williams ✓

It was the Spring and early Summer of 1962. Much was being said and done in Jamaica regarding the imminent emancipation of Jamaica from colonial status to join the growing ranks of independent nations. Jamaicans all over the world were elated at the prospects of independence and self-government.

In Toronto, in those days, there was only a handful of Jamaicans. Not many of us knew each other. We were very few and far between. We were a scattered band of rugged pioneers comprised of nurses responding to the shortage of nurses in Canada; students attending university; some household workers; and a few others who were brave enough to find themselves in Canada by various means.

There was no organization of Jamaicans — no clubs, no churches, no common meeting ground. Few Jamaicans owned their own homes then. We were really a part of nothing and needed to have an identity and to become a part of something.

The Jamaican Independence was the catalyst that enabled Jamaicans to come together to celebrate something significant in their history and to retain the structure for their future identification and well being.

One man made it all possible — Edmund S. Ricketts, an ageless veteran of many wars who tried to teach music to every black child (or adult) in the city. He played in every army band that marched, paraded or played anywhere in the city. He could be seen in every Santa Claus, Grey Cup and other parades playing his clarinet and marching like a man 40 years younger.

Ricketts was the man who walked the streets of Toronto (he always walked) and contacted every person whom he believed to be a Jamaican and invited them to meetings which were held in people's houses and apartments. He helped generate the enthusiasm for the celebration of the Jamaican Independence and for the creation of a permanent organization of Jamaicans following the event.

Some of the people whom Ricketts brought together for those initial meetings are: Vi Carter, Bromley Armstrong, Amy Nelson, Mavis Magnus, George King, Ira Dundas, Daphney White, Byron Carter, and Vi King. There were others because the numbers kept increasing as Ricketts continued his relentless recruiting. Some of the above were on the first Executive Committee of the newly-emerging Jamaican-Canadian Association.

The association has grown in power, influence and numbers to become one of the premiere organizations in this multicultural society. The road has not been an easy one. There have been pitfalls and traps. There have been skeptics and detractors. There have been those who would undermine or destroy the organization. However, it has survived these 21 years and its prospects have never been better. It can and will move on from strength to greater strength. It will accomplish the purposes for which it was founded.

This, then, is a tribute to the energy, dedication, enthusiasm, selflessness and vision of the late Edmund S. Ricketts who worked so tirelessly to translate a dream into a reality.



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Nostalgia-Agony and Ecstasy

by Hugh B. Evelyn

It was Stachell Paige, America's baseball great, who said: "Don't look back; something may be gaining on you." But for this once let's look back on the Jamaican Canadian Association's 21 years of life in Canada and share its nostalgia, with all the agonies and ecstasies on this, its 21st Anniversary.

The birth of JCA in August 1962 quite aptly coincided with Jamaica divesting itself of 307 years of British rule.

In an ideal world, immigrants of colour with culture perhaps different from their neighbours, may not need to organize themselves into what sometimes may be perceived as "isolation groups". Unfortunately we are not living in an ideal world. It is a world fraught with imperfection and intolerance.

Even if it were not so, it is a healthy community which finds harmony and unity among its own common denominator, as it does with its neighbours.

On September 23, 1962, the JCA held its first executive meeting under the leadership of young and energetic Roy G. Williams, the JCA's first president, aided by the team of Bromley Armstrong, George King, Ira Dundas, Mavis Magnus, J.B. Campbell, Owen Tennyson, Phyllis White, Vie Carter and Esmond Ricketts. They were selected by their peers to chart the course of an organization committed to the interest of Jamaicans living in Toronto.

That year, 1962, the association celebrated Jamaica's first independence celebration, a tradition it has kept ever since. Old timers will recall that night at the King Edward Hotel, when 11 year old Donna Armstrong, dancing to her father's congo drum, set the limbo record of 6 inches. Roy Williams in his maiden speech said: "For the first time in history, you have a flag; for the first time in history, you have an anthem; for the first time in history, you have a country - one of which you can be proud" Today, 21 years hence, those words still hold true.

JCA is famous for its annual picnics. Progress reports show that in May 1963 its first excursion of one bus went to Niagara Falls. This year, May 1983, seven (7) buses took the excursioners to Niagara Falls. Remember in 1979 how Byron Carter beat Errol Townshend in the 200 yards sprint - and that was before metric. Lillian Hatchett also beat off all challengers in the women's sprint. I am reminded of that old school song: "Gone are the days when my heart was young and gay."

Immigration: JCA in 1962 and now, display a deep interest in immigration matters. In February 1963, Roy Williams served on the Executive Committee, Immigration Section, of the Social Planning Council.

Beauty Queens: Although JCA's interest in beauty contests has waned, there were some good moments. Two events that come to mind: JCA succeeded in doing what the Caribbean Federation failed to do - they selected a Trinidadian one year as Miss J.C.A. and 1968 was a bonus year for beauty queens; 21 year old Patricia Fletcher was crowned. Not only was she accompanied by her chaperone Amy McDonald to meet the Governor General, but as a bonus, Lloyd Perry who was in Jamaica at the time was present too.

Speaking of Lloyd Perry, did you know that Lloyd was instrumental in getting JCA's first office space at 85 Lombard Street in 1963? He has been a friend for years.

Jamaica Government Office: The establishment of an office in Toronto was due primarily to the persistent efforts and representations of JCA to the government(s) in Jamaica. The bond between that office and JCA has remained strong.

Who remembers the Trinity College Buttery? JCA held its first quarterly meeting there. Jamaica's Ambassador to Canada H.A. Maynier paid his first visit then to Toronto.

Police-Community relations: This has always been a concern of the Association. In rummaging through the records, I note in its February 1963 newsletter, the following was reported under the caption: Member's complaint against the Police. The story said: "You have no doubt read in the papers about one of our members who was picked up by the police, unduly detained and discourteously treated. They have discussed the situation with us and apologized to the lady concerned. We shall continue to take the necessary steps to protect our civil liberties from unwarranted encroachment."

In the JCA's 1969 Annual Report, under the caption: Police and Ethnic Minority, the following was recorded: "This year there were fewer complaints about mistreatment by the police. The strong reaction by the public to the notorious film "Revolution Underway" probably resulted in a revision of the police methods of dealing with persons of colour."

Today, 1983, are we satisfied that police-community relations in the black and West Indian community have improved?

Agony: I ran into an old newspaper clipping (elsewhere in this magazine) advertising the sale of the Old Mount Sinai Hospital. I understand the price was right. I never found out whose vote or voters caused the decision not to buy. What a gold mine lost! The disastrous fire that razed "Jamaica House"

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Anniversary Celebration

by B. Fitz-Gerald

By its nature, a colonial government must ensure that a body of rules favourable to maximum extraction of wealth are rigidly adhered to. It cannot permit any person in the colony, however gifted or experienced that person may be, to make a decision that will substantially alter the regulations, or the law, or the order of things.

The vision of Marcus Garvey; the genius of men like J.A.G. Smith and Norman Manley in their fight for voters rights; the advent of Alexander Bustamante and his fight for the social and economic upliftment of the ordinary man, are all contributing factors in the history of Jamaica that helped to change Jamaica from a Crown Colony into an independent nation without bloodshed or dictatorship.

Whether the thwarting of a Caribbean federation was an act of wisdom is still a subject of debate. In August 1962, the baton was passed to a nation, now charged with the responsibility of "making decisions" for themselves.

August 6, 1962 was declared Independence Day. Indeed, a befitting gift to Alexander Bustamante and the people of Jamaica.

Jamaica, since 1962, has been governed 13 years by a Jamaica Labour Party government, and 8 years by a People's National Party government, both enunciating different ideologies. The economic and social struggles have indeed been rocky; yet the people of Jamaica have been steadfast in their national will.

August 6, 1983 marked our country's 21st Anniversary of its independence. Jamaica has come of age. Jamaicans living abroad fervently hope that this will be the year that the political adherents and the people of Jamaica will forge a new spirit of unity and goodwill that will take our country along a road of prosperity, peace and love.

A Message from the JCA's President



The Jamaican Canadian Association has now become synonymous with Jamaica's growth and the development of Jamaicans since our independence.

As Jamaicans in Canada, we must extend our thanks and congratulations to the founders of JCA, who 21 years ago had the vision, foresight and innovative spirit that enabled them to organize and establish such a great and viable organization that weathered the rough and difficult times faced over these years.

Congratulation to all the past presidents and their administrations for the wonderful job they all did in laying a strong foundation, thereby enabling the JCA to develop and mature to the age of 21.

This year, for the second time, the JCA was able to raise the Jamaican Flag at Nathan Phillips Square. This was not only to celebrate Jamaica's birthday but also to commemorate with pride, the memory of some of our founding and long standing members who have now passed on, such as Mrs. King and Mr. Rickets. Congratulation also to those alive and active.

As a mature organization, we are now expected to give and deliver all kinds of leadership services both here in Canada and in our native country. I hope we can rise to face the challenges of the future and give more of ourselves to build a better society.

The JCA has served the Jamaican, West Indian and Canadian communities very well over the last years and intends to serve you more in the future. To help us do this we need your support in acquiring a community centre. I welcome everyone to join us and be a part of this project.

Once again, congratulations to everyone for a job well done and I am proud to be president of the Jamaican Canadian Association on this, the 21st anniversary.

Rupert James
President

Greetings from the City of Toronto



I take pleasure in extending greetings to the Jamaican/Canadian Association on the occasion of your 21st Anniversary, and your celebration of the 21st Anniversary of Jamaican independence.

Toronto enjoys the reputation of being a multicultural society, where Canadians of many ethnic backgrounds live and work in harmony. The contribution of the Jamaican community has added greatly to this reputation.

I welcome this opportunity of wishing you well during this celebration of your heritage and culture.

Art Eggleton
Mayor,
The City of Toronto

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